

# *Walking Carefully in Every Season*

May 18, 2008

## **Ephesians 5:15-17 (ESV)**

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

## **Introduction: Changing Seasons are Here to Stay**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Adolescent                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Empty Nester                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Adult                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Menopause                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married without Children       | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for Elderly Parent(s) |
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## **I. Recognizing God's Providence in Each Season**

- **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

*"God's providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people." Jerry Bridges*

*"God never pursues His glory at the expense of the good of His people, nor does He ever seek our good at the expense of His glory. He has designed His eternal purpose so that His glory and our good are inextricably bound together. What comfort and encouragement this should be to us. If we are going to learn to trust God in adversity, we must believe that just as certainly as God will allow nothing to subvert His glory, so He will allow nothing to spoil the good He is working out in us and for us." Jerry Bridges*

- **Acts 17:26**  
*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*
- **Psalm 115:3**  
*Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.*
- **Proverbs 16:1**  
*The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*
- **Proverbs 16:9**  
*The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*
- **Proverbs 19:21**  
*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*
- **Daniel 4:35**  
*... all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can sway His hand or say to him, "What have You done?"*

“From the rise and fall of governments to tomorrow’s weather to the exact location of every human being, the universe is under God’s control. He has the power and authority to do exactly what pleases Him, anywhere He chooses to do it. God’s sovereignty is not only about power and position, but also about a plan. Scripture clearly teaches that God has a plan for His world and the people in it. God is calling a people to Himself, forming them into His likeness, and preparing them for an eternity with Him. This is His overarching plan of the ages, revealed in history, present in current events and in the lives of everyone who has ever lived. At any moment in time, the right answer to the question, “What is God doing?” is, “Accomplishing His plan.” Paul Tripp

- “We are not for one moment of our lives at the mercy of chance.” Elisabeth Elliot

“At the outset, then, let my readers grasp that providence means not that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that by which, as keeper of the keys, He governs all events.” John Calvin

- **Romans 8:28**

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*

*“There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God’s sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought to more earnestly content to than the doctrine of their Master over all creation – the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands – the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne...for it is God upon the Throne whom we trust.” C.H. Spurgeon*

“Nothing can ever touch us that does not come first through the hedge of the love of God.” Elisabeth Elliot

- **Philippians 4:6**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

A. The knowledge of God’s sovereignty is meant to be an encouragement to pray, not an excuse to lapse into fatalism.

*“Prayer assumes the sovereignty of God. If God is not sovereign, we have not assurance that He is able to answer our prayers. Our prayers would become nothing more than wishes. But while God’s sovereignty, along with His wisdom and love, is the foundation of our trust in Him, prayer is the expression of that trust.” Jerry Bridges*

*“Because God is sovereign, we should pray. God’s sovereignty does not negate our responsibility to pray, but rather makes it possible to pray with confidence.” John Flavel*

- B. We have a responsibility to act prudently

*“We must depend upon God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We must, to the same degree, depend on Him to enable us to do what we must do for ourselves.” Jerry Bridges*

## II. Responding To God’s Instructions in Each Season

- A. What does God Say? Ephesians 5:15-17:

1. *Look carefully then how you walk...v.15*  
*See then that you walk circumspectly ...v.15 (NKJV)*

Circumspectly - cautiously; with watchfulness every way; with attention to guard against surprise or danger. Careful of consequences.

2. *...not as unwise but as wise...v.15*  
*...not as fools but as wise....v.15 (NKJV)*
3. *...making the best use of the time...v.16*

### **Psalm 16:5-6**

*The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

4. *...because the days are evil. v.16*

### **1 Peter 5:8**

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

### **1 Peter 2:11**

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

### **Matthew 6:34**

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

5. *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. v.17*

B. What must I do?

1. Withdraw and pray

**Luke 5:15-16**

*But now even more the report about Him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear Him and to be healed of their infirmities. But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

“P.T. Forsyth once said. “The worse sin is prayerlessness.” We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft as among the worst. But the root of all sin

is self-sufficiency independence from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God’s guidance and strength we are saying with our actions if not our lips, that we do not need Him.” Charles E. Hummel

*“It’s cute when children assume they can create or accomplish something all by themselves. However, it is altogether different and more serious if we conclude that we can grow in godliness, conquer sin, or spend our time wisely all by ourselves. That’s why we must seek God each and every day. If nothing else, sitting at Jesus’ feet says to God: “I need you!” Carolyn Mahaney*

“It is easier to serve than to commune.” Spurgeon

2. Define my season

3. List my priorities

a. The Cross

“The Cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us.”

John Stott

b. Because of the Cross.....

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.*

- Growing in personal holiness
- Loving my family
- Serving in the church
- Fellowshiping with believers
- Evangelizing unbelievers
- Attending to my work
- Caring for my physical health

4. Evaluate myself

> Am I staying close to the Cross? Am I daily “preaching the Gospel to myself”?

> Are these priorities evident in my daily life?

> Given my present season, am I giving the right amount of time, energy and attention to each priority?

> Is the investment I’m making in each of these priorities bringing glory to God?

> Is there anything about my present investment into each priority that is not bringing glory to God and thus needs to change?

> Are there any “good” activities or “noble” endeavors in which I am presently involved that are hindering my investment into priority relationships?

> Why am I involved in this particular activity or endeavor? Is it to glorify

God or is it for selfish gain?

- > Is there anything I am doing presently that needs to be postponed until another season?
- > Will what I am sowing in this season reap a good harvest in the next?
- > Am I bearing fruit in the most important areas in this season of my life?

5. Create a strategy for change

“Change takes place in the details.” David Powlison

### III. Remembering the Brevity of Each Season

**Psalm 90:5-6** *You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.*

**Job 7:7**

*Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good.*

**Psalm 144:4**

*Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow.*

**James 4:14**

*...yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

“Whence proceeds the great stupidity of men, who, bound fast to the present state of existence, proceed in the affairs of life as if they were to live two thousand years...In short, men are so dull as to think that thirty years, or even a smaller number, are, as it were, an eternity; nor are they impressed with the brevity of their life so long as this world keeps possession of their thoughts. How speedily our life vanishes away. The imagination that we shall have long life, resembles a profound sleep in which we are all benumbed.” John Calvin

**Psalm 90:12**

*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

**Conclusion:**

**James 1:5**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

*“Take one step at a time, every step under Divine warrant and direction. Ever plan for yourself in simple dependence on God. It is nothing less than self-idolatry to conceive that we can carry on even the ordinary matters of the day without his counsel. He loves to be consulted.”*

*Charles Bridges*